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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Schwabacher : DECISION ON PETITION
Application No. 09/253,153 :
Filing Date: 19 February, 1999 :
Attorney Docket No. 2003118-0002 (T00001US) :

This is a decision on the renewed petition filed on 6 August, 2004, to revive the instant application 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) as having been abandoned due to unintentional delay.

For the reasons set forth below, the petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the final Office action mailed on 11 February, 2003, with reply due absent extension of time on or before Monday, 12 May, 2003;
- Notice of Abandonment was mailed on 21 November, 2003;
- the original petition filed 26 January, 2004, was dismissed on 14 July, 2004, for failure to file a proper reply—Petitioner filed an after-final amendment, which was deemed by the

Examiner not to be a proper reply to the final Office action;¹

- with the instant petition, Petitioner files a Request for Continued Examination (with fee) under 37 C.F.R. §1.114, and the amendment previously submitted is considered as the required submission.

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).²

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.³

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁴ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁵ And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁶ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

¹ The proper response to the final Office action (see: MPEP 711.03(c)) must be in the form of: (a) an amendment *prima facie* placing the application in condition for allowance; (b) a Notice of Appeal; or (c) a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) (with fee and submission) under 37 C.F.R. §1.114.

² 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

³ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

⁴ See: *Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice*, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁵ See: *In re Application of G*, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁶ See: *Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment*, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁷)

Allegations as to Unintentional Delay

A grantable petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) requires a petition, fee, statement of unintentional delay, reply, and a terminal disclaimer and fee if appropriate.

As indicated above, Petitioner now has submitted a proper reply, as required by regulation.

CONCLUSION

The petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **granted**.

The instant application is released to Technology Center 1600 for further processing in due course.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (703) 305-9199.



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⁷ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.